



DEMOCRATIC POLICY COMMITTEE

TALKING POINTS



TP-59-Campaign Finance Reform

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October 13, 1999

Democrats Continue Their Fight to Reform the Campaign Finance System

Democrats have a strong record of support for campaign reform.

For more than ten years, Democrats have fought to pass campaign finance reform to fix America's electoral system and restore credibility to our electoral process. As campaign spending skyrockets, public cynicism and apathy has grown, while neutral observers predict that candidate spending will top \$3 billion in the 2000 campaign. Democrats understand that because campaigns have become more dependent on large campaign donations, the American public feels disconnected from the electoral process.

Republicans continue to block campaign reform. Since the late 1980s, Republicans have maneuvered to maintain the status quo and block campaign finance reform through "poison pill" amendments, filibusters, and a Presidential veto. In the last Congress, a majority of the Senate supported campaign reform. However, the Republican Leadership chose to stifle consideration of a campaign finance reform bill to maintain the influence of big money donors and special interests, and to protect election attack ads.

Democrats support a soft money ban. S. 1593, the *Bipartisan Campaign Reform bill* is a scaled-down version of previous comprehensive reform bills. This modest reform measure bans soft money from Federal elections and should be the starting point for any consideration of campaign finance reform. The soft money loophole allows special interests and wealthy individuals to funnel unlimited and undisclosed sums of money into campaigns. In the 1998 election cycle, Republicans raised \$131.6 million in soft money, a 151 percent increase over the 1994 election cycle, while Democrats raised \$92.8 million, an 89 percent increase over the same period.

Democrats will work to strengthen reform efforts. Senate Democrats will work to strengthen **S. 1593** by offering the Shays-Meehan campaign reform bill as an amendment. On September 14, 1999 the House passed the Shays-Meehan campaign reform legislation, which is essentially the same as the legislation supported by a majority of the Senate in the 105th Congress. The bill would:

- ban soft money contributions from wealthy individuals, corporations and unions;
- identify “issue advocacy” campaigns that are designed to attack individual candidates rather than educating the public about an issue;
- expand disclosure requirements and strengthen penalties for election law violations; and
- require labor unions to notify non-members that they are entitled to request a refund of the portion of their dues used for political purposes.

Democrats remain committed to comprehensive reform and will continue to fight to fix our campaign system and restore public confidence to the electoral process.